

Transcription of Charles Scott's Speech at the 1906 unveiling of the Confederate Monument
on the University of Mississippi's Campus

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Bracketed items indicate corrections of obvious typographical or punctuation errors that might otherwise interfere with comprehension; all other text is original.

MR. SCOTT MAKES SPLENDID SPEECH

AT THE UNVEILING OF MONUMENT TO CONFEDERATES

AN ELABORATE PROGRAM

There Were Several Counties to Participate in the Exercises—Many Ladies Were Present.

MR. SCOTT SPEECH IN FULL

It Was In Every Way a Rare Literary Gem and Was Listen to With An Unusual Degree of Interest by Those Present.

Oxford, Miss., May 10. —Hon. Charles Scott of Bolivar, was selected as the orator of the day to deliver the address at Oxford this morning on the occasion of the unveiling of a monument to the Confederate soldiers, erected on the campus of the University by the Albert Sydney Johnston Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. An elaborate programme had been arranged and several counties and Confederate bodies participated in the auspicious event. Mr. Scott said:

Ladies of the Albert Sydney Johnston Chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy; Ladies and Gentlemen; Friends and Fellow Citizens:

More than forty years have been added to the silent centuries since the Southern Confederacy passed away, "the youngest and the noblest and the bravest" of all the nations of the earth.

When her stainless banner was forever furled on the fateful field of Appomattox, the enlightened lovers of liberty and justice in all countries and all climes joined with the distressed sons and daughters of the south in saying with white lips and heavy hearts—

"Let the ritual now be read,
The requiem now be sung,
An anthem for the queenliest dead
That ever died so young;
A dirge for her the doubly dead,
In that she died so young."

In view of this early and untimely death, we who love the Lost Cause with all the ardor of a Manfred for his fair Astarte, are doubly rejoiced to know that the South left a lasting impression of grandeur and glory on the hearts and minds of the universe, that can never be effaced.

This, my friends, is no idle boast. Go where you will within the confines of the civilized world and the memory of southern valor and southern chivalry is venerated and esteemed.

It was my good fortune to see this fact strikingly exemplified during the past season. One night in the early part of last October I was seated, with my wife [and] daughter, in the rotunda of the Grand Hotel at Paris, one of the stateliest and handsomest hotels in all the world. It was brilliantly illuminated, of course, with electricity, but something like 1,000 incandescent lights were, on ordinary occasions, always held in reserve. This rotunda, with the adjoining café and dining hall, constitutes one immense room with a seating capacity, I imagine for 1,500 persons. Every available space was occupied. The scene was a most brilliant and striking one. The fragrance of rare flowers mingling with delicate Parisian perfumes, the handsome toilettes, the costly and sparkling gems, worn by queenly women, but almost dimmed by the radiant lustre of their star-like eyes; the commanding presence of brave men, soldiers, diplomats and civilians from all parts of the world, the soft tones of the inspiring music, and the gorgeous colors in the back ground all combined to instinctively recall the historic ball at Brussels on the night before the great battle between Wellington and Napoleon, when, Byron tells us—

“There was a sound of revelry by night
And Belgium’s capitol had gathered then
Her beauty and her chivalry, and bright
The lamps shown o’er fair women and brave men;
A thousand hearts beat happily, and when
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
Soft eyes looked love to eye which spake again,
And all went merry as a marriage bell.”

Entranced with the brilliant and beautiful scene we enjoyed the full sweet tones of the inspiring music, as the splendid band rendered many artistic and popular airs. These included a number of national anthems. Among them those of Germany, and Great Britain, and the United States. And then hank out the Marseilles, the national him of the great French republic. The crowd enjoyed all, but gave no audible or visible sign of approval.

Finally, my fellow citizens, the quick, glad tones of Dixie fill the air. Instantly every reserve light were flashed on and as the joyous, exhilarating strains grew louder and louder, filling the vast hall and reaching from the lofty dome, there was spontaneous applause, deafening and prolonged. Before realizing it I found myself on my feet, with tears in my eyes, scarcely able to restrain my emotion, and if you, my fellow Mississippians, had been there, we would have startled the astonished ear of Paris for once, at least, with that wild, weird, exhilarating, inspiring cry known to all men as “the Rebel Yell.”

This ovation to Dixie was not an accident. The air was rendered once again during our stay at the Grand Hotel. Again the reserve lights flashed on in its honor, and the applause followed; a distinction that was not accorded to any other national anthem among them all. Why, you ask, is Dixie so honored in the far-off land of the French lillies? No one in the hotel could tell me; but the cause is not far to seek. It is the involuntary homage paid by the civilized world, (now that we are better understood), to the memory of the old south, once radiant with all “the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome.” Her record, my countrymen, merits these unusual honors, and is one in which you may well take pride. The ability of her statesman, the genius of her military leaders, the courage of her soldiers, and the devotion of her women, have long ago attracted the attention and challenged the admiration of all mankind.

These noble qualities deserve and usually command success. That they failed in this instance is no cause for surprise. They fail because, with the exception of great Britain alone,

THE SOUTH WAS PRACTICALLY FIGHTING THE WHOLE CIVILIZED WORLD.

That such was the cause is evident to any unbiased mind. To begin with, public opinion, that mighty power, “that moves the hand that moves the world,” had been poisoned and turned against us. The South is now partly understood since the passionate discussions over the question of African slavery have passed away, but prior to and during the civil war the Southerner was represented to all the nations of the earth as a traitorous and arrogant slave owner, ever ready to destroy the government because it would not subserve his selfish ends. History indignantly repudiates the charge. As a matter of fact the people of the South were the loftiest and most unselfish patriots known in the annals of all time. Their ardent devotion to the union of the revolutionary fathers was something sublime and pathetic. The great pacificator Henry Clay, whose eloquence and personal magnetism so often allayed sectional hatred and strife, was himself a child of the sunny South. He faithfully and frequently voiced the sentiments of his people in their earnest desire to perpetuate the Union between the states, and on more than [one] occasion succeeded in averting a civil war.

It became evident, however, as far back as 1803, that our brethren of New England were not altogether free from sectional jealousy and animosity. The acquisition of Louisiana was accomplished, you will remember, in that year. When this happened George Cabot, who had been a senator of great influence, from Massachusetts, during Washington’s administration, expressed his intense disapproval of the supposed effect it would have in increasing the power of the Southern states; and Senator Pickering, of the same state, was one of the first[] secessionists in America. I quote from a letter of his written in 1804, suggesting a dissolution of the Union as follows:

“A northern confederacy would unite congenial characters and present a fairer prospect of public happiness, while the southern states, having a similarity of habits, might be left to manage their own affairs in their own way.”

In 1811, when the bill to admit Louisiana into the Union as a sister state was under discussion, the Hon. Josiah Quincy, then a member of Congress from Massachusetts, used the following language in debate on the floor of the National House of Representatives:

“If this bill passes, it is my deliberate opinion that it is virtually a dissolution of this Union, that it [will] free the states from their moral obligation; and as it will be the right of all, so it will be the duty of some, definitely to prepare for a separation—amicably if they can, violently [if they] must.”

In elaborating the position assumed in this memorable speech, under discussion he used, in part, this language:

“Is there a principle of public law better settled or more conformable to the plainest suggestions of reason than that the violation of a contract by one of the parties may be considered as exempting the other from its obligation? Suppose, in private life, thirteen form a partnership, and ten of them undertake to admit a new partner without the concurrence of the other three—would it not be at their option to abandon the partnership after so palpable an infringement of their rights? How much more in the political partnership, where the admission of new associates, without previous authority, is so pregnant with obvious dangers and evils!”

These sentiments were solemnly repeated, you will remember, in 1814 by representatives of some of the New England States in the Hartford Convention; and it is indisputable that the right of secession in these early days was boldly asserted by many leading gentleman throughout the North and was accepted by an overwhelming majority by statesman and citizens in all parts of our common country.

Afterwards the tables turned. The balance of power was transferred to the North. They no longer felt uneasy lest the star of empire should take its way towards the sunny South.

Discriminating import duties were levied by the National Congress which militated seriously against the agricultural exporters of the Southern states. Northern fanatics under the leadership of Wendell Phillips and other abolitionists, industriously sowed the seeds of sectional hatred and strife. The decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in the Dred Scott case was ignored. The rights of southern property owners were trampled underfoot. Southern soil was invaded. John Brown was applauded while living and was revered as a martyr when dead, for inciting insurrection amongst our slaves, in total forgetfulness of the fact that the Declaration of Independence had specifically mentioned this as one of the heinous wrongs and crimes which justified the colonies in severing their relations with the mother country.

The high spirited, sensitive South still clinging to the Union with love and tenacity stood these wrongs with more or less impatience, but she could not preserve her self-respect and submit to the actual degradation. The paramount question was not the slavery question. As our enemies have stated, that was a mere incident. The real issue was the right of the Southern states to equality in a union which had been rendered possible by the martial achievements and civic services of the great southerners, Washington, Jefferson, Monroe and others, a Union which had been consecrated too by thousand[s] of southern lives. When it became apparent then that this equality could no longer be maintained the self respect of the South forced her, at last, to assert her peaceable right to secede; a right which had been expressly recognized and vigorously asserted, as I have already stated, throughout New England and other northern states.

Permit me, on this subject of transcendent importance, to quote from that other great Southerner—Jefferson Davis, the revered President of the Southern Confederacy. He says:

“No alternative remained except to seek the security out of the Union which they had vainly tried to obtain within it. [The] hope of our people may be stated in a sentence. It was to escape from injury and strife in the Union, to find prosperity and peace out of it.”

These, my countrymen and countrywomen, were some of the reasons which forced the secession of the Southern states. That they had the right to secede is beyond cavil or dispute. This right existed under the constitution and had been advanced, as I have just stated, time and again by the New England states, and as an abstract question, it is sanctioned by the best lawyers and publicists of the present day, among the number being Charles Francis Adams of Massachusetts, a lineal descendent of the president of that name.

It was the ardent love of the South for the Union that prompted her to postpone [the] decisive step from year to year. The delay was fatal. If secession had taken place at any time prior to the Missouri compromise, or even ten years later, no civil war would have [supervened]. At that time, the South was master of the situation. After that the north grew rapidly in prosperity and power and population. The Southern states also improved of course, notwithstanding the unequal tariff laws, but in less degree. Besides about 40 per cent of the population of the South was composed of African slaves and their descendants, and this, with other conditions, placed her at a great disadvantage in the contest with her Northern neighbors.

Chief among these other things, the south, let me say, was totally unprepared for war, because she was practically without arms or ammunition or machinery. Indeed, one of the very first acts of the Confederate government was to send Rafael Semmes, the greatest American naval officer since the days of John Paul Jones, to the north in an effort to purchase these articles; while another officer was dispatched to Europe on a similar mission. The war that President Davis had anticipated all the while was precipitated by the north before these necessary supplies could be obtained, and of the mighty conflict was born the Confederate soldier, who stands out as the most heroic figure of all the ages.

Compare him, if you please, with all the warriors of modern times; or if you prefer, look back into shadowy realms of the historic past, and see if his prototype or superior can be found.

In your mind's eye you see them all, these valiant warriors who fought and died for conquest or renown.

The phantom hosts pass before your mental vision in barbaric splendor, marshaled with all “the pomp and circumstance of war.”

See the young Alexander with his Macedonian cohorts, all gleaming in purple and gold, triumphant over all his enemies and neighbors, he weeps. Alas, because there are no more worlds for him to conquer.

Look now, if you will, on the bold adventurous Hannibal, surrounded by the Alpine snows, as he leads his dusky followers bravely on past Cannae to threaten the massive gates of imperial Rome.

And now behold the great Cesar as he crossed the Rubicon, his prophetic vision teaching him in advance that he and the tenth legion would be crowned forever with the halo of an imperishable renown.

Last, but not least, salute that “grand, gloomy and peculiar” king of all earthly kings who, with his old guard and his young guard, proudly planted the imperial eagles of France over every throne in Europe which was not protected by either the snow or the sea.

These have all achieved imperishable renown, but their glories are forever dimmed by the spotless banner of the Lost Cause and the martial achievements of the brave southerners who defended it and followed it.

These Confederate soldiers, my friends, were different in many salient characteristics from all the warriors of all the world. With the exception of a few officers who had been educated at West Point, they were entirely lacking in military experience or military training. High strung, spirited and independent, they were naturally impatient of discipline or restraint. Reasonably provided at home with the necessaries of life and, many of them, with its luxuries, they were not prepared to take kindly to the hardships and privations of the field; and yet they made superb soldiers. This was not owing altogether to their sublime courage, though they were justly accounted the bravest of the brave; nor to their good marksmanship, though they were accustomed to firearms from early boyhood.

These desirable qualities counted for much, but the great efficiency of the southern armies was based on the spirit of an order so as to execute an important strategic movement controlling fact that, while acting as a whole under orders, like a perfect machine, yet each individual soldier was a perfect machine within himself, capable not only of entering into with promptitude and rare intelligence, but also capable of acting, on his own initiative, and constantly doing so in the unforeseen emergencies that frequently occurred in the crisis of a great battle.

There was another thing. The southern soldier, whether officer or private, fought neither for gold nor other gain. The call to arms was prompted neither by vengeance nor hatred. No unholy lust for conquest, nor consuming love of martial glory summoned them from their peaceful homes, forth to the tented field. These men battled for a principle, in which each believed with all his heart and soul and mind. Overwhelmed at last by countless numbers and the boundless resources of a hostile world, for the south fought the whole world as I have already stated, the soldiers of the Lost Cause returned to desolate homes and devastated fields. There they promptly assumed, and faithfully discharged, all the duties and responsibilities of American citizenship.

There was a time, I grant you, during the nightmare called the reconstruction, when these men boldly, aggressively and intentionally overrode the letter of the law that they might maintain the spirit of the law and preserve Anglo Saxon civilization as a priceless heritage for their children's children and for the benefit of our common country, the people of the north as well as the people

of the south. Indeed, do you know that I regard this act as the crowning glory of the Confederate soldier. It overshadows all his brilliant victories on the field of battle. It entitles him to the lasting gratitude of the civilized world, and mark my prediction, the time will come as foreshadowed by many things, notably by the recent utterances on the race question of that great American, already mentioned, Charles Francis Adams, in the last number of the Century magazine, when our brethren of the north will see this grave question as we see it, and thereafter for this one act alone the memory of the Confederate soldier will be revered by the north as it is already loved and revered by all the people of the south. But in an admiration of this paramount service to civilization we must not lose sight of the sublime courage and fortitude with which the soldier of the Lost Cause otherwise demeaned himself during the dark days of reconstruction. He met all the requirements of his trying position and discharged all its duties with so much of intelligence, promptitude and industry that he saved the south from impending financial ruin and soon restored something of her former prestige and prosperity.

All this was done, too, with a southern grace and courtesy and good humor which, in the course of time, disarmed all enmity and criticism, and brought our common country together, thank God! once more in the golden bands of love and good fellowship, making it possible in less than the span of a single life, to lend additional lustre to the glory of the American arms through the martial achievements of southern heroes like Wheeler and Hobson.

The noble traits and distinguishing characteristics of the southern soldiers are known and honored of all men. They must be doubly dear, then to you, my friends, as southerners and Mississippians; and I voice your sentiments in saying that it is altogether meet and proper that these departed heroes be remembered and honored throughout all [the] recurring years. Here, as in all acts of grace and kindness, where the heart speaks best and surest, it has been the [provenance] of the fair daughters of the south to point the way. And so Decoration day comes to us as a direct inspiration from their pure hearts, and should always remain a distinctive feature of our southern life. And so with the stately monuments to the Confederate dead; they, too, are the noble handiwork of our southern women, inspired by their devoted love and consecrated by their sacred tears. We can never hope, gentlemen of the south, to adequately express our gratitude for all this labor of love. That is impossible. But southern chivalry will be recreant to its loftiest ideas if we fail to erect a most beautiful, massive and costly monument to the women of the south who have already erected thousands of monuments to its men.

It was in grateful recognition of these loving acts and of your noble work in the dark days of the Civil war that the beloved chieftain of the Lost Cause dedicated to you, my fair countrywomen of the south, his great work on the Rise and Fall of the Confederate government. The chaste and beautiful words composing this dedication make it one of the gems of modern literature. Let me repeat them then for your pleasure as being especially appropriate on this solemn occasion:

“To the women of the confederacy, whose pious ministrations to our wounded soldiers soothed the last hours of those who died far from the objects of their tenderest love; whose domestic labors contributed much to supply the wants of our defenders in the field; whose zealous faith in our cause shone a guiding star undimmed by the darkest clouds of war; whose fortitude sustained them under all the privations to which they were subjected; whose annual tribute expresses their enduring grief, love and reverence for our sacred dead; and whose patriotism will teach their

children to emulate the deeds of our revolutionary sires; these pages are dedicated by their countryman, Jefferson Davis.”

The great Creator, my friends, made man, we learn from the pages of holy writ, in his own image. He was endowed by his omnipotent maker with courage and endurance and high resolve. But the noblest attributes of all were intentionally and wisely reserved for woman. Faith, hope and charity wait on her gentle footsteps; while her boundless love has made her the ministering angel of all time. “The first at the cross and the last at the grave,” we turn to her for protection in our infancy; for inspiration in our manhood; for sympathy in the hour of death; and for an abiding love as long as life shall last. Nor do we look in vain. All this is accorded us; and after we pass the silent portals which separate us from the shadowy boundaries of another world, it is through her loving kindness that our memories are cherished and our good deeds are preserved.

And so, my fellow citizens, while we admire this beautiful work of art, which will stand forever as an enduring monument to the memory of the Confederate dead, we know instinctively, without question or doubt, that it represents the inspiration and loving work of the fair ladies of this cultured and hospitable city and county who are banded together for a noble and patriotic purpose as the Albert Sydney Johnston Chapter of the Daughter[s] of the Confederacy. It will serve, then, a double purpose by proclaiming to all future generations the gallantry of the Southern soldier and the nobility of the Southern woman. The one is a complement of the other, and, together, they constitute the crowning glory of the Southern character. Such must be the thought of those who look upon its monumental shaft in the years to come. But what of the beloved heroes my fellow citizens, who have gone before? Where is the brave veteran in whose honor it has been erected?

“Close his eyes, his work is done
What to him is friend or foeman,
Rise of moon or set of sun,
Hand of man or kiss of woman?
Lay him low, lay him low,
In the clover or the snow;
What cares he? He cannot know.
Lay him low.[’]

Somehow I cannot believe, my friends that such is the case. I prefer to think rather, that these heroes of the Lost Cause are with us here today in loving approval of these memorial ceremonies. I prefer to believe that these Confederate soldiers, who “sleep on fame’s eternal camping ground” join with the few who still survive in looking to the dear women of the South to keep the record clear, as Mr. Davis earnestly enjoined on them in the beautiful dedication which I repeated a few [moments] ago. Let me conjure you then, my countrywomen, never to forget that this is your allotted [and most] sacred task. It is your solemn duty; as it will be your pleasure to teach the children of the South now and always these salient and controlling facts:

The Confederate soldier was neither a traitor nor a rebel.

He was a devoted patriot who staked his all for a principle, which, to him, was dearer than life itself.

There can be no question or doubt that the South had the constitutional right of peaceable secession.

And there can be no doubt that the provocation fully justified the exercise of this important right.

I grant you that for all practical purposes some of these questions have been settled long ago by the stern arbitrament of the sword. The war is over. Its animosities have passed away. The white rose and the red now cluster lovingly and peacefully together, side by side, on the fair bosom of our beloved country. But, nevertheless, we must keep the record clean. We owe this to ourselves, to our children and to our beloved South. We owe it, also [to] the united America who has enough strength and justice to look the truth boldly and placidly in the face; more especially is this the case since all are now agreed that each section was right as it was given to it to see right. In the light of a new and better day, we no longer see through a glass darkly, but we will draw closer and closer together as the two sections go marching on under gorgeous ensign of the great republic to the fulfilment of a glorious destiny, as pointed out by the finger of God. At last the whole nation accepts, in all its length, and breadth, and solemn significance, the noble and patriotic sentiments of Oxford's statesman and "My countryman, know one another peerless orator, the incomparable amar; and you will love one another."